

## Last-minute touches at Lena Point



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Jack Christiansen, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration facility manager, installs locks Wednesday at the offices in the new Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute at Lena Point.

## NOAA moves into new research center

Building allows agency to expand its scientific programs in the state

By BRITTANY RETHERFORD  
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National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration officials were handed the keys to their new \$51 million building at Lena Point this week and have begun moving in.

"We are starting to move our library. It will take time," said Steve Ignell, deputy director of the NOAA Auke Bay laboratory.

The library occupies roughly 1,000 square feet of shelf space and has been in storage since August 2006.

This new 69,000-square-foot building will allow National Marine Fisheries Service to expand its scientific research programs in the state, which has produced nearly 5 billion pounds of commercially harvested fish annually for the past 30 years.

The institute will house researchers who examine the long-term health of marine resources and how they change over time.

Simultaneously, the University of Alaska Fairbanks School of



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**New facility:** National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration officials were handed the keys to the Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute at Lena Point this week. The main entrance to the facility is in the center of the photo. Construction of the \$51 million building started in May 2005.

Fisheries and Ocean Sciences operates a graduate program out of its Juneau center and is constructing a new building at the institute's site. The \$21.5 million project is slated to be finished in spring 2008.

"From our perspective it was a successful project," Ignell said.

Construction of the project, the Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute at Lena Point, started in May 2005 and was slated for completion in December 2006. In October 2006, contrac-

tors told the Empire that construction was in its "final countdown."

"The fact the schedule was delayed for a few months wasn't a big negative. It didn't impose any sort of hardship on us," Ignell said.

"It is one of those things that you go through to get the building you asked for," he said.

Only about 40 items are left on the contractor's "punch list," but not enough to affect safe use of the facility, Ignell said. These

include things such as installing awning covers and completing outside landscaping.

The first trucks laden with new furniture will begin arriving today. It will take about three weeks for contractors to complete that job.

The 85 employees who will work at the building begin moving in May 29. Then comes moving the laboratories. Ignell anticipated that everything will be moved in by July. Employees previously worked from the Auke Bay Laboratory, a 2.5 acre site that has been their home since that facility first opened in December 1960.

"Moving a lab that was here for 47 years is not a trivial thing," he said.

The total budget for the project was estimated at \$51 million, Ignell said. Ignell said he recently received an e-mail indicating that the final costs will fall within that appropriation.

A grand opening ceremony is tentatively scheduled for mid-August.

"We are excited," Ignell said. "There is a lot of excitement here among the staff."

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